

VZCZCXRO9547

OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR

DE RUEHPS #0477/01 1701428

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

O 191428Z JUN 07

FM USOFFICE PRISTINA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7455

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1187

RHMFSS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

RUFQADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY

RHFMIS/AFSOUTH NAPLES IT PRIORITY

RHMFSS/CDR TF FALCON PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY

RUFQANA/USNIC PRISTINA SR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRISTINA 000477

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/SCE, DRL, INL, AND S/WCI, NSC FOR BRAUN, USUN
FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER, OPDAT FOR
ACKER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/17/2017

TAGS: PGOV KJUS KCRM EAID KDEM UNMIK VI

SUBJECT: KOSOVO FINAL STATUS: SPECIAL ENVOY WISNER FINDS
KOSOVAR LEADERS ANXIOUS, PREOCCUPIED

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In Pristina June 14-17, USG Special Envoy for Kosovo Amb. Frank Wisner delivered a message to Kosovo Albanian national and local political leaders, businesspeople, media, academics, and religious figures that the quality of Kosovo's independence is as important as the speed at which it will arrive. He reiterated President Bush's recent remarks in Tirana of strong USG support for Kosovo independence, but counseled all to show patience and restraint as the U.S. works at the UNSC to garner the broadest possible acceptance and recognition of this result -- "making sure every stone has been turned." This message was received somberly by all interlocutors, including Kosovo's increasingly fragile Unity Team (UT), made up of the leading governing and opposition figures. President Sejdiu and PM Ceku feared that absent a clear way ahead the UT, perhaps as early as July, would come under enormous pressure for not having delivered independence, and political stability would consequently deteriorate. High-level internationals expressed similar fears, including SRSG Ruecker, who also pointed to UNMIK's waning authority. And, for the first time in several months, opposition leader Thaci intimated that prolonged delay in the status process might cause his party to demand a reformulation of government or find some other mechanism to address their political needs. This visit confirmed our view that, whatever modalities are worked out regarding an additional period of consultation or discussion, the peace and security of Kosovo, and the stability of its government, require that clarity be provided to the Kosovars about the road ahead on status without much further delay. END SUMMARY.

Message Delivered and Understood...

¶2. (C) USG Special Envoy for Kosovo Status Issues Amb. Frank Wisner, in Pristina June 14-17, delivered a message to a variety of Kosovar interlocutors -- including President Sejdiu, PM Ceku, main opposition leader Thaci, Kosovo's Unity Team (UT), Kosovo Assembly members, business leaders, academics, a KLA war veterans representative, and the local leaders of two municipalities, including mayors, businessmen

and Islamic and Catholic religious figures -- on the need for patience and restraint with regard to Kosovo's final status process. Reiterating President Bush's recent remarks strongly supporting Kosovo independence, Amb. Wisner nevertheless underscored that Kosovo's interests were best served by seeking the broadest possible international acceptance and recognition of its independence, which would allow for the kind of assistance and development Kosovo so badly needs. He noted that the best vehicle for achieving this international acceptance was via a UNSC resolution, despite this being a time-consuming and complex business. In private meetings, Wisner also pointed to the importance of assuring full consensus within the European Union on Kosovo, thus allowing for the deployment of an EU-led International Civilian Office and ESDP mission.

...But Unity Team Under Pressure, Key Leaders Nervous

¶3. (C) While all interlocutors expressed deep appreciation for U.S. support, particularly the unambiguous remarks of President Bush in Tirana and Sofia, key leaders were sober in their analysis of how much time they had, absent a resolution of status, before pressure on the Unity Team engendered a collapse of political consensus. President Sejdiu said clearly that the UT was reaching the end of what it was capable of handling and that frustration with the status process among Kosovars was real -- "the situation is simmering." Similarly, PM Ceku was deeply concerned when confronted with the prospect of continued negotiations, asking what could possibly be their content and averring that he would be unable to participate unless mandated to do so by a Security Council resolution. Wisner cautioned Ceku against laying down such markers, given the imperative of bringing the Europeans along and assuring full consensus among Western

PRISTINA 00000477 002 OF 003

countries. In general, Kosovar leaders suggested that political stability might deteriorate as early as July, particularly if the July 1-2 meeting of Presidents Bush and Putin produced no agreement on the way ahead. Amb. Wisner said he shared Kosovars' frustration with the process, but reaffirmed the notion that "every stone needed to be turned" in order to show the Europeans and the world that all avenues had been exhausted and that the only outcome can be independence.

¶4. (C) In a separate discussion with Amb. Wisner, Thaci raised for the first time in several months the prospect that -- as a consequence of prolonged delay in the status process -- he and his party might demand the reformulation of government or other assurances from the existing coalition as the price for continued unity. He quickly added, however, that other solutions might suffice: an agreement to hold elections by year's end even without a resolution of status (municipal mandates ran out a year ago and the national assembly's mandate will expire in October) or what he termed "a special understanding" between his PDK and President Sejdiu's ruling LDK party on key issues including constitution drafting and elections. Amb. Wisner concurred that elections might be a good means to provide leaders with legitimacy in the pre-final status period and beyond and would keep Kosovars occupied, though sensitive issues -- support for the Ahtisaari Plan, most vitally -- would need to be off-limits to partisan debate. Wisner also noted that a reformulation of government, and the ensuing confusion and delay in determining ministerial portfolios, would almost certainly harm the status process at a sensitive juncture and would be unnecessary if elections were really in play.

...Internationals, Too

¶5. (C) Amb. Wisner found internationals equally nervous about the continuing uncertainty. EU Planning Team head Casper Klynge said he was very concerned about the possibility of political instability in the early July timeframe if the Bush-Putin meeting produced nothing and the

final status process stalled. He feared that much of the transition work would then be at risk. Klynge and ICO Preparation Team deputy head Ben Crampton argued that only a date certain for independence, even a date months from now, would calm the waters. Given the frustration, neither ruled out an incident sparking unrest and extremist groups being able to direct public anger at the international presence. Both also recited copious reasons why the EU would be paralyzed in the event that no UNSC was achieved and were pessimistic about the options for forming a "coalition of the willing" to back an ICO or ESDP-like arrangement if no resolution was forthcoming.

¶ 16. (C) At a dinner hosted by COM, SRSG Joachim Ruecker agreed with these assessments, saying it was no longer sufficient to tell the Kosovars "you will one day be independent," as visiting Italian Foreign Minister D'Alema had done during the previous day's visit to Pristina. Given the waning authority of UNMIK, Ruecker said he was inclined to favor elections this year as a sort of "gap filler" to occupy Kosovars and get them to think of things other than status. Ruecker also noted to Wisner that UNMIK and DPKO were doing some preliminary thinking on UNMIK's posture should prolonged uncertainty undermine the UN's ability to effectively administer Kosovo.

Outreach With Others Confirms Uneasiness

¶ 17. (C) Meeting with mayors and local leaders in the municipalities of Viti and Ferizaj, in USKFOR's area of responsibility and accompanied by USKFOR Commander BG Earhart, Wisner heard common complaints about high unemployment and lack of development. But many tied these problems, rightly or wrongly, to lack of clarity on Kosovo's independence. One local party leader said he is under constant pressure for not being able to provide a clear

PRISTINA 00000477 003 OF 003

deadline on status and that the only mandate for him was the question of independence. Wisner pushed back on this, noting that all should take care not to focus on deadlines or make promises not in one's power to keep. Wisner added that the local leader's first responsibility was to work on the reform and development of his municipality up to and beyond independence. At an outreach event with business people, academics and policy analysts in Pristina, Wisner heard from the head of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce that status uncertainty was further damaging the already low business confidence in Kosovo, as investors were delaying or canceling decisions about engagement in Kosovo's economic sector.

¶ 18. (C) Newspaper and TV editors during an on-background roundtable asked questions that clearly reflected frustration at the continued stalemate. Troublingly, they directed much of their anger at the Unity Team: "People have assumed that negotiations are over, how can there now be another round?" Amb. Wisner argued compellingly that there was no desire or plan to reopen the Ahtisaari package, but that it was imperative for Kosovo's own future that every chance was given to finding an internationally-backed solution for Kosovo, even if it required the appearance of more discussion to exhaust all options.

Comment

¶ 19. (C) Amb. Wisner's visit provided a good opportunity to gauge Kosovar reaction to the current uncertainty on final status resolution. On the one hand, there is deep respect and appreciation for the U.S. role in pushing the independence issue and an understanding of our arguments that broad acceptance and recognition of Kosovo must be achieved in concert with the Europeans and others, which takes time and effort. Equally evident, however, is the darkening mood among Kosovo's leadership and general public, and the palpable anxiety those leaders exhibit when told that more time will be needed to find a consensus way forward. The

Unity Team is under severe strain, and that pressure will only grow as we reach July and the Bush-Putin summit passes. That which is in short supply -- clarity on the process and a reasonable timeframe for the conclusion of the status process -- is likely the only thing that can prevent a general meltdown of the fairly remarkable political consensus that has characterized this negotiation process in Kosovo from its inception. This was the exceptionally clear message across the board from Kosovars of every social and political standing to Amb. Wisner during an exhaustive three-day series of interactions.

**¶10. (U) Amb. Wisner has cleared this message.
KAIDANOW**